

FISHERIES UPDATE FOR THE WEEK OF JUNE 1-7, 2014.

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Office of Subsistence Management, USFWS.

The purpose of the weekly fisheries update is to provide the reader with an overall summary of the status of subsistence related fisheries throughout the state of Alaska. The target audience is the Federal Subsistence Board and its Staff Committee. The report was compiled with the assistance of the Federal in-season managers and OSM staff that provided weekly updated information by the close of business on Friday of the reporting week. My goal is to have the report sent by the close of business the following Monday. Web links have been included to provide additional information. You may obtain additional information on a fishery of particular interest by contacting the in-season manager, provided contacts, follow the provided web links, or contact me.

SOUTHEAST ALASKA**Sitka and Hoonah Area – Justin Koller, Forest Service, Tongass National Forest**

Justin Koller, (907)747-4297 jpkoller@fs.fed.us

Sockeye

The Sitka Tribe of Alaska operates the sockeye monitoring weir at Klag Bay which is scheduled to be operational the last week in June. In 2013, a total of 6,896 sockeye salmon migrated past the weir while an estimated total of 4,550 sockeye salmon were harvested in the marine terminal area subsistence and sport fishery. Subsistence harvest accounted for over 99% of terminal area harvest

The Forest Service operates the Redoubt Lake weir and video-equipped net weir which are scheduled to be operational in mid-June. In 2013, an estimated total of 49,124 sockeye salmon passed through the weir into Redoubt Lake. On June 27th, 2013, in accordance with the Redoubt Lake Management Plan, the Alaska Department of Fish and Game set the individual/household subsistence sockeye salmon possession limit at 25 and the individual/household subsistence sockeye salmon annual limit at 100. The preliminary subsistence sockeye salmon harvest in 2013 was 4,336. Also consistent with the management plan, a directed commercial fishery was open targeting Redoubt sockeye salmon for the first time since 2007. The fishery was open eighteen days between July 7th and August 3rd and resulted in the harvest of 3,304 sockeye salmon.

The Forest Service and the Organized Village of Kake operate the Falls Lake trap and video net weirs which will be operational the first week of July. The final escapement in 2013 was estimated at 1,120 sockeye salmon while the final subsistence and sport harvest in the marine terminal area was 880 sockeye salmon. Subsistence harvest accounted for over than 98% of terminal area harvest.

Wrangell/Petersburg Area – Bob Larson, Forest Service, Tongass National Forest
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Week ending Jun 7, 2014; statistical week 23

The weekly Chinook salmon abundance estimate for this week remains below a level that will allow the directed subsistence fishery to reopen. There has been a major landslide on the Tahltan River, a major spawning tributary to the Stikine River for Chinook and sockeye salmon. A group of geologists, biologists and mining engineers are evaluating the need for intervention to make the river passable to salmon. The following link provides a summary of Southeast Alaska and Yakutat commercial fisheries.

http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=commercialbyareasoutheast.salmonfishery_updates

Yakutat, Juneau, and Admiralty areas of Northern Southeast Alaska - Ben Van Alen, Forest Service, Tongass National Forest
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The sockeye salmon runs and subsistence fisheries are just starting in the Admiralty and Juneau areas. Project personnel are preparing for the double-redundant video net weir projects at Neva Lake, Kook Lake, and Sitkoh Lake which are scheduled to begin in mid-June.

In the Yakutat area, the sockeye salmon runs usually begin in earnest in mid-June. A news release will be out soon to inform Federal subsistence users that the Forest Service will not be issuing Federal subsistence fishing permits to take Chinook salmon in the Situk River unless ADF&G personnel count enough Chinook salmon through the Situk weir to justify reopening the State's subsistence fishery for Chinook salmon.

The Southeast Alaska purse seine fishery will begin on Sunday June 15 at Point Augusta and Hidden Falls with a 15-hour opening. The Purse Seine Fishery Management Plan does not indicate that the State is planning to take any new or additional management actions to reduce harvests of sockeye salmon bound for bays and streams in the Angoon and Kake area. Special restrictions will probably not be needed in 2014 since the seine effort reflects the pink return and the pink salmon return is anticipated to be relatively small as it has been in recent odd years. The escapements of pink salmon were low and below goals in the northern inside area in 2012. In 2013, the sockeye escapements were at or near the lowest on record in Neva, Kook, Sitkoh, and Falls Lakes.

The Alaska Department of Fish and Game has increased the daily and annual household limit for the subsistence take of sockeye salmon at Kanalku from 15 to 25 fish.

Prince of Wales and Ketchikan District Area – Jeff Reeves, Forest Service, Tongass National Forest.

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Permits continue to be returned from the Prince of Wales/Kosciusko Spring Subsistence Steelhead fishery. A total of 63 permits were issued to Prince of Wales Island residents during this fishery. Permits from this fishery being returned and are not due back until June 15. The total reported harvest from permits returned to date is at 7 with 3 from the Thorne River and 4 from Staney Creek.

The 2014 General salmon permits for Southeast Alaska are valid through the end of the year. Currently, 111 permits have been issued for this fishery.

Most subsistence users are actively fishing marine waters for Chinook salmon and halibut under sport fishing regulations. Although a couple of Prince of Wales Island streams have June returns of sockeye, most subsistence users are in preparation for subsistence harvest in July.

A sockeye salmon weir is currently active and fishing at Hatchery Creek. To date 3 sockeye have been counted at this project. The Hetta Lake project is currently in early stages.

No commercial fishing has opened yet within fishing Districts 1-4.

Southeast Alaska Web Links***Tongass National Forest News Room***

<http://www.fs.usda.gov/news/tongass/news-events>

Federal Subsistence Fisheries Regulations for Southeastern Alaska Area

http://www.doi.gov/subsistence/regulation/fish_shell/upload/Southeast.pdf

ADF&G Sport and Personal Use Fishing News Release and Emergency Order Link

<http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/sf/EONR/index.cfm?ADFG=region.R1>

ADF&G Commercial Fisheries News Release and Emergency Order Link

<http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=cfnews.main>

Weekly ADF&G Sport Fishing Reports for Southeast Alaska

<http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/sf/FishingReports/index.cfm?ADFG=R1.home>

Statewide ADF&G Fish counts

<http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/sf/FishCounts/>

SOUTHCENTRAL ALASKA

Prince William Sound – Copper River – Molly McCormick, Wrangell-St. Elias National Park/Preserve. (907) 822-7280 Molly_McCormick@nps.gov

As of June 7, 2014 the ADF&G sonar at Miles Lake (located just downstream of the Million Dollar Bridge in the Copper River) estimated that 523,369 salmon had migrated upstream. This estimate is 192% of the projected escapement objective of 273,268 for this date, or 250,101 more salmon. An estimate of 22,810 salmon migrated by the sonar counter on June 7th.

MILES LAKE SONAR ESTIMATES (TOTAL SALMON)

Year	Estimate	Year	Estimate	Year	Estimate	Year	Estimate
1978	107,011	1987	483,478	1996	906,867	2005	854,268
1979	237,173	1988	488,398	1997	1,148,079	2006	959,731
1980	276,538	1989	607,797	1998	866,957	2007	926,438
1981	535,263	1990	581,895	1999	848,921	2008	614,999
1982	467,306	1991	579,435	2000	587,592	2009	709,330
1983	545,724	1992	601,952	2001	833,569	2010	924,010
1984	536,806	1993	797,902	2002	819,000	2011	914,285
1985	436,313	1994	715,181	2003	695,233	2012	1,271,354
1986	509,275	1995	599,265	2004	669,646	2013	1,267,060

Commercial harvests in the Copper River District of Prince William Sound are:

- 6,742 Chinook
- 871,610 sockeye
- 42 coho
- 12 pink
- 30,808 chum

The Chitina Subdistrict opened on June 7 and remained open through June 8. It reopened on June 9 and is scheduled to remain open the entire week. The state and federal fisheries usually follow identical fishing schedules which are set by the state. Thirty-six Federal Chitina Subdistrict permits have been issued on FWS's online data base. Additional permits for this subdistrict have been issued in Chitina and Kennecott, NPS ranger stations that do not have internet connectivity.

The Glennallen Subdistrict opened for Federal subsistence users on May 15th and is expected to remain open until September 30th. 142 Federal Glennallen permits have been issued on FWS's online data base. Additional permits for this subdistrict have been issued in Chitina and Kennecott, NPS ranger stations that do not have internet

connectivity. The state subsistence fishery in the Glennallen Subdistrict opened on June 1st.

The Batzulnetas fishery is open, no permits have been issued so far.

The Tanada Creek weir was operational on May 23. No fish have been counted through the weir yet. The water level in the creek is very low. Salmon usually arrive at the weir in mid- June.

Current information from the Eyak fish scan website was not available but 800 Chinook had been tagged at the two project fishwheels in Baird Canyon operated by the Native Village of Eyak and 37 had been recaptured at the Canyon Creek wheels as of May 31.

ADF&G's counting tower in the Gulkana River was installed on June 4. As of June 5, 6 Chinook and 672 sockeye have been counted.

Two Special Actions have been issued by the park this season:

- setting the tentative preseason schedule for the Chitina subdistrict.
- delaying the starting date of the Chitina River federal salmon fishery

Links

Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve Subsistence User's Guide

<http://www.nps.gov/wrst/historyculture/upload/Subsistence%20brochure.pdf>

Prince William Sound Federal Subsistence Regulations including Copper River.

http://www.doi.gov/subsistence/regulation/fish_shell/upload/Prince.pdf

PWS and Copper River Flats – Milo Burcham, Forest Service, Cordova.

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The Copper River District will open at 7:00 am for a 36-hour commercial fishing period on Monday, June 2. Cumulative Miles Lake sonar count to date is 264,000 fish whereas the anticipated count for this date is 145,000 fish. A preliminary harvest estimate from the 36-hour period that began on Thursday, May 29 was 189,000 sockeye and 1,200 Chinook salmon with 910 deliveries reported. The anticipated harvest for this fishing period was 89,000 sockeye salmon

A total of 9 Federal Subsistence fishing permits have been issued to residents of Cordova for fresh waters of the Copper River Delta. Harvest is not reported until after fish reports are returned at the end of the season. Sixty-five permits were issued for the 2013 season with a reported harvest of 358 coho salmon and 102 sockeye salmon.

Cook Inlet Area – Jeff Anderson, Field Supervisor, Kenai Fish and Wildlife Field Office (907) 260-0132 Jeffrey_Anderson@fws.gov

The 2014 subsistence dip net fisheries for salmon will begin on the Kenai and Kasilof rivers 15 June and 16 June, respectively. Seasons and areas for subsistence fishing with rod and reel are the same as for the taking of fish under Alaska sport fishing regulations. Most of the initial rod and reel subsistence effort will be focused at sockeye salmon in the Upper Kenai and Russian Rivers which opens on June 11. Totals of 64 Kenai River permits and 5 Kasilof River permits have been issued through 5 June.

The Cook Inlet preseason outlook is well below average for Chinook salmon and average for sockeye salmon. Based on a preseason forecast of about half of the 5,300 minimum escapement goal for early-run Kenai River Chinook salmon, the Alaska Department of Fish and Game issued an emergency order to close the sport fishery through 30 June. The lower river DIDSON sonar has been operational since 16 May; a total of 461 Chinook salmon have been counted through 2 June which is well below projections necessary to achieve the lower bound of the early-run escapement goal. Therefore, a Federal Special Action will likely be issued next week to prevent harvest of Kenai River Chinook salmon prior to the 15 June season opener.

Early-run sockeye salmon are now entering the lower Kenai River and will start to show in the upper Kenai and Russian rivers any day now. The ADF&G weir on the Russian River is typically operational by 10 June to monitor the return of early-run sockeye salmon.

Kodiak Island Area – Anne Marie LaRosa, Refuge Manager, - Kodiak NWR
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The sockeye salmon returns are strong along the west side of Kodiak Island with sockeye salmon numbers for Karluk and Ayakulik Rivers being substantially higher than the five year average to date. The high number of sockeye salmon returning to these systems has prompted ADF&G to open commercial fishing in various bays from Spiridon Bay south to the mouth of the Ayakulik River. In addition, to the strong runs to the Karluk and Ayakulik Rivers, the Afognak River system is experiencing higher numbers also, which enabled ADF&G and USFWS reduced the fishing markers to the stream terminus, starting on June 5, 2014.

Subsistence fishing for sockeye salmon is off to a strong start with Kodiak gillnetters fishing at Litnik (Afognak River), Buskin River and in front of Port Lions. The Kodiak Refuge RIT received reports of subsistence harvest in sets of up to 180 reds at the Buskin River and 90 reds at Litnik. These fish that are being caught are split among families in town with many other efforts being made as well.

Port Lions villagers are gathering fish from the cove in front of their village and the tribe is gearing up for a local subsistence camp for youth next week, where more fish will be harvested as a community and learning takes place for the younger generation.

Larsen Bay subsistence fishing is also occurring in between commercial activities. Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Subsistence Division, along with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Kodiak Refuge RIT will be cooperatively observing subsistence harvest and processing next week in Larsen Bay for the purpose of an ongoing subsistence harvest and use pattern study.

Old Harbor subsistence users have harvested some sockeye in the early run when effort is made in the outer bays away from town. More subsistence fishing will occur later in the year especially during the silver run at Big Creek.

Federal Subsistence Fisheries Regulations for Kodiak Area

http://www.doi.gov/subsistence/regulation/fish_shell/upload/Kodiak.pdf

Bristol Bay and Chignik – Doug McBride Fisheries Branch Chief Anchorage Fish and Wildlife Field Office

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These areas support abundant returns of salmon, particularly sockeye; as well as some of the largest commercial fisheries for salmon in Alaska. All of the assessments of salmon returns are conducted by the State of Alaska, and provide the basis for any inseason assessment. None of the adjustments in commercial fishing management throughout any of these areas are anticipated to affect subsistence fishing in waters under Federal subsistence fisheries jurisdiction, and these subsistence fisheries commence later in June and July.

Bristol Bay:

Preseason forecasts for sockeye salmon run returns to Bristol Bay, Chignik, and the Alaska Peninsula predict that there will be harvestable surpluses in all districts, and that escapement goals will be achieved in all systems.

For Bristol Bay, the forecast for total return of sockeye salmon is similar to 2014 at approximately 26 million, and escapement goals total ~ 8.5 million sockeye, leaving ~ 17 million sockeye available for harvest. Harvestable surpluses are projected for all systems. The largest returns are predicted for the Egegik, the Naknek/Kvichak, and Nushagak districts. ADFG Commercial Fisheries Division has strategies in place for all mixed stock districts to address differential run strength should that occur. The commercial fishing seasons open by regulation in early June. In most districts, weekly fishing schedules are in place until later in June.

Chinook salmon returns have been poor to moderate in recent years throughout most of Alaska, including Bristol Bay. In 2013, there was one directed opening for Chinook salmon in the Nushagak District and that remains a possibility this year depending upon run strength. Some conservation measures are in place for most districts to conserve Chinook salmon, including mesh size restriction to 5 ½ inches through mid to late July (depending on district) and reduced fishing time in June (varies by district).

Gillnets are the primary gear used for most subsistence fishing for salmon. A permit is required for subsistence harvest of salmon.

Chignik:

For Chignik, the forecast for total return of sockeye salmon is approximately 0.8 million early run and 0.9 million late run fish. The forecasts for both early-run and late-run sockeye are in excess of escapement goals. The early-run SEG was reclassified to a BEG starting in 2014. The late-run SEG includes an additional 50,000 sockeye for additional subsistence harvest opportunity. Commercial fishing management is based on early run assessment until July 4; then late run assessment after that. Harvestable surpluses are projected for both runs, and escapement goals should be met.

The escapement goal for Chinook salmon is 1,300 fish. Projected commercial harvest in the Chignik Management Area is 5,000 Chinook salmon and is based upon anticipated fishing time for sockeye. In 2013, all inriver Chinook salmon fisheries, including the new Federal subsistence fishery, was closed by E.O. (State fisheries) or Special Action (Federal fishery closed effective July 27). No Federal subsistence harvest was realized for 2013. The Federal subsistence fishery for Chinook is currently open until August 9 with rod and reel from a point 300 feet upstream of the ADFG weir to Chignik Lake with no daily harvest or possession limit under the authority of a Federal subsistence fishing permit. Most of the Chinook return occurs in July. Federal subsistence fishing permits are available in four communities through village or tribal administrators.

Select tributaries to Chignik Lake are open to subsistence fishing. Gillnets and seines are the primary gear used for most subsistence fishing. A permit is required for subsistence harvest of salmon.

Alaska Peninsula:

There are numerous salmon stocks and fisheries throughout the Alaska Peninsula, as well as the Aleutian Islands. Several sockeye escapements (mostly on the north peninsula) are monitored with weirs including Nelson, Bear, Sandy, Ilnik, McLees, and Orzinski rivers. Preseason forecasts are made for only the Nelson (500 thousand) and late-run Bear (400 thousand) river sockeye stocks. The largest fisheries are managed under management plans. Management objectives vary by district and time; and include: local sockeye escapements; more distant sockeye returns to Bristol Bay or Chignik; and local pink, chum, or coho returns.

A permit is required for subsistence harvest of salmon.

Stock Assessment funded under the Subsistence Fishery Resource Monitoring Program:
For 2014, there are no stock assessment projects funded under the Subsistence Fishery Resource Monitoring Program.

Federal Subsistence Fisheries Regulations for Bristol Bay Area
http://www.doi.gov/subsistence/regulation/fish_shell/upload/Bristol.pdf

Federal Subsistence Fisheries Regulations for Chignik Area
http://www.doi.gov/subsistence/regulation/fish_shell/upload/chignik.pdf

Southcentral Alaska Web Links

Federal Subsistence Management Fisheries News Releases
<http://www.doi.gov/subsistence/news/fishing/index.cfm>

ADF&G Sport and Personal Use Fishing News Release and Emergency Order link
<http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=fishingSportFishingInfo.R2>

ADF&G Commercial Fisheries News Release and Emergency Order Link
<http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=cfnews.main>

Weekly ADF&G Sport Fishing Reports for Southcentral Alaska
<http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/sf/FishingReports/index.cfm?ADFG=R2.Home>

Statewide ADF&G Fish counts:
<http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/sf/FishCounts/>

Yukon River – Gerald Maschmann, Fish Biologist USFWS Fairbanks Office.
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Fred Bue Fredrick_Bue@fws.gov
Emmonak Summer Office (907) 949-1798

The Emmonak Field Office is operational for the 2014 field season and can be contacted by calling (907) 949-1798.

Assessment Information

Ice out on the lower Yukon River was one of the earliest on record with the ice going out at Alakanuk on May 9, fourteen days earlier than average. Additionally, Bering Sea ice has retreated off the coast, leaving the Yukon River mouth ice free. With ice out earlier than average, managers are anticipating earlier entry timing for Chinook and summer

chum salmon. The first subsistence caught Chinook salmon was reported on May 19, the earliest report in a decade.

The ADF&G Big Eddy and Middle Mouth test fishing project has been partially operational. The Big Eddy chum drift net test fishery has been operational since May 21 and the Big Eddy Chinook salmon drift net test fishery has been operational since May 26. The Big Eddy Chinook set net test fishery has been operational since May 26 and located at different sites than previous years due to changing river bank conditions. Middle Mouth operations began June 6 however the north mouth site is not being fished to conserve Chinook salmon. An effort is being made this year to release alive as many Chinook salmon as possible caught in the drift fishery to conserve the weak run. The department also suspended the Chinook salmon set net fishery on June 7 when fish numbers increased to conserve Chinook salmon. The projects have reported catching Chinook and chum salmon in both the drift and set net test fisheries. At this time it is too early to assess the strength of either the Chinook or the chum salmon runs, however it appears that both the Chinook and chum runs are entering the Yukon early. NOAA's Chinook salmon timing forecast model has predicted that the first pulse of Chinook salmon should be entering the Yukon River around June 10. The Pilot Station sonar crew has been test fishing since June 4 and began estimating salmon passage on June 6 noting the presence of both Chinook and chum salmon.

Subsistence fishermen catch reports indicate that whitefish harvests were good in the two weeks after ice out. Chum salmon subsistence reports in the lower Yukon have indicated low catches, however some fishermen have reported catching some chum in dip net gear. There appears to be too few chum in the river to make dip netting effective. Subsistence fishermen along the coast in Scammon Bay and Hooper Bay have reported good chum catches. Some reported being half or more finished with their subsistence chum harvests.

Summer Season Outlook and Management Strategies

The summer chum run is projected to be average to above average and to provide for escapement and subsistence uses. A surplus of 300,000 to 500,000 summer chum is anticipated to be available for commercial harvest, however the commercial harvest opportunity will depend upon available markets and the strength of the overlapping Chinook salmon run. The Chinook salmon outlook is projecting an extremely poor run. The run size is projected to be between 64,000 to 121,000 Chinook salmon with managers anticipating the run near the low end based upon recent productivity. Subsistence conservation measures will be required to share the available subsistence harvest and meet escapement goals. No directed Chinook salmon commercial or subsistence fishery is anticipated. Public meetings were held throughout the winter and spring to inform fishers of the outlook. The following management strategies were formulated after extensive public input:

- Before Chinook salmon enter the river, subsistence fishing opportunity for non-salmon species will be provided and gillnets may be restricted to 6-inch or smaller mesh size.

- As Chinook salmon arrive in each district, subsistence fishing for Chinook salmon will be closed. The closure is expected to be in place for most of the run through each section of river. Fishermen in the Coastal District, Koyukuk, Innoko, and Tanana Rivers should expect some closed fishing time to protect Chinook salmon in those areas. Closures will be initiated in the Coastal District and District 1 when assessment information indicates that the first Chinook salmon have begun their migration along the coast and into the river. This closure will be similarly implemented in upriver fishing districts and subdistricts based on migratory timing.
- During subsistence salmon fishing closures, non-salmon species may be harvested using 4-inch or smaller mesh size gillnets not exceeding 60-feet in length. However, no targeting of Chinook salmon with this gear type will be allowed. This opportunity to harvest non-salmon will be discontinued if this gear is used to target Chinook salmon.
- When summer chum salmon become abundant, subsistence and commercial fishing opportunities will be provided with selective gear such as dip nets, beach seines, and manned fish wheels. Fishermen must carefully and immediately release Chinook salmon alive when encountered in these gear types.
- Fishermen are strongly encouraged to avoid fishing when and where Chinook salmon may be encountered.
- Subsistence restrictions will be relaxed after the Chinook salmon run has passed through each section of river. If confidence is high that the Chinook salmon run is much better than anticipated, the use of 6-inch gillnets may be considered to allow for summer chum salmon harvest.
- The sport fishery for Chinook salmon will be closed in the U.S. portion of the Yukon River drainage (including the Tanana River drainage). Sport fishing for Chinook salmon, including catch-and-release fishing will be prohibited. Chinook salmon may not be retained or possessed.
- The fall chum salmon run is anticipated to be of sufficient size to provide for full subsistence opportunity and a surplus for commercial harvest.
- The fall chum commercial salmon fishery is expected to begin in the Lower Yukon in the middle of July.

Management Actions

Until assessment data become available, management decisions will be consistent with the preseason projections. On May 16 the Coastal District and Districts 1 & 2 were restricted to 6-inch or less mesh gear to protect early run Chinook salmon while providing fishermen the opportunity to harvest whitefish. On May 26, subsistence salmon fishing was closed in the northern portion of the Coastal District and Districts 1, 2, and 3 to conserve Chinook salmon. Subsistence fishing utilizing 4-inch or less mesh gear is still allowed 24 hours per day, 7 days per week. Subsistence chum salmon fishing with dip nets was opened in Districts 1, 2, and 3 on June 1. Subsistence fishermen utilizing dip nets are required to release all Chinook salmon back into the river. Subsistence salmon fishing in the Lower Subdistrict 4A, Upper Subdistrict 4A, Subdistricts 4B/C, and Subdistricts 5A/B/C was closed on May 31, June 2, June 4 and

June 7, respectively. Subsistence fishing with 4-inch or less mesh gear is still allowed 24/7. Subsistence dip net opportunities for District 4 will be opened when chum salmon reach these areas. Subsistence fishing in Yukon River Subdistrict 5D is open 24 hours per day, 7 days per week, with gillnet gear restricted to 7.5-inch or less mesh size. District 6 is open on their normal subsistence fishing schedule of two 42-hour periods with gillnets restricted to 7.5 inch or less mesh size. The sequential activation of subsistence fishing restrictions will continue in all districts moving upstream.

Kuskokwim River – Brian McCaffery, Refuge Manager, Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge Brian McCaffery@fws.gov or Robert Sundown (907) 543-1007 Robert.Sundown@fws.gov

Weekly Summary

At this time subsistence fishing restrictions are in place. Restrictions on gillnets to 4 inches or less and staked have been in effect since May 20th. Compliance has been relatively good with a few exceptions. Several violations have been observed in Akiak and Tuluksak. A drift gillnet with a large net (50 fathoms) was observed in Akiak on June 7. A citation was issued in the village of Tuluksak to an individual for fishing 8" gear. The Bethel Test Fishery is showing a promising start to the Chinook run, however the numbers have to account for the lack of fishing below Bethel.

Management Actions

Federal management actions were implemented on the Chinook fishery. These actions took effect on May 20, 2014 and impose restriction on mesh size (4" or less) used in the set gillnet fishery in the Kuskokwim River within the boundaries of the Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge and its salmon tributaries; the Kwethluk, Kisaralik, Kasigluk and Tuluksak rivers. In addition to the gillnet restrictions all mentioned tributaries are closed to the take of Chinook by hook and line as well as sportfishing. The actions also limit the Chinook fishery to Federally Qualified Users. OSM staff are in Bethel to finish issuing permits for the social and cultural allocation scheduled to take place in the latter half of June.

The Kuskokwim Salmon Management Working Group Met on June 5, 2014 to hear the current state of Chinook salmon on the Kuskokwim. The working group voted to urge fisherman not to protest fish and voted to support the Kwethluk and Tuluksak weirs. The next meeting is June 17 or at the call of the chair, whichever is sooner.

Enumeration Projects

Bethel Test Fish: Through July 7th

- The cumulative index for kings was 110, which is two weeks ahead of the previous two years. However, the king fishery is closed and no kings harvested below Bethel are not accounted for this.
- For chum salmon the cumulative index was 21. This is approximately 1 week ahead of the previous two years under the same scenario above.

- Sockeye salmon have a cumulative index of 0.
- Coho salmon have a cumulative index of 0.

Weirs: Weirs are in the process of being installed

Yukon-Kuskokwim-Interior Alaska Web Links

Federal Subsistence Management Fisheries News Releases:

<http://www.doi.gov/subsistence/news/fishing/index.cfm>

Federal Subsistence Fisheries Regulations for Yukon–Northern Area

http://www.doi.gov/subsistence/regulation/fish_shell/upload/Yukon.pdf

NEW = Kuskokwim River Updates Hosted on OSM Website

<http://www.doi.gov/subsistence/kuskokwim.cfm>

Federal Subsistence Fisheries Regulations for Kuskokwim Area

http://www.doi.gov/subsistence/regulation/fish_shell/upload/Kusko.pdf

ADF&G Sport and Personal Use Fishing News Release and Emergency Order link:

<http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/sf/EONR/index.cfm?ADFG=region.R3>

ADF&G Commercial Fisheries News Release and Emergency Order Link:

<http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=cfnews.main>

Weekly ADF&G Sport Fishing Reports for Interior Alaska:

<http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/sf/FishingReports/index.cfm?ADFG=R3.home>

Statewide ADF&G Fish counts:

<http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/sf/FishCounts/>

Northwest Alaska – Ken Adkisson, National Park Service, Nome.

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Norton Sound

The herring run into Norton Sound occurred about a week earlier than expected this season. ADF&G biologists observed about 2,000 tons of herring from Klikitarik Point to Tolstoi Point on May 15. On May 18 pilots observed herring spawn near Klikitarik Point. The ADF&G opened a commercial herring bait fishery to set gillnets on the afternoon of May 18.

Subsistence crabbing is open year round but crabbers need to obtain subsistence crabbing permits.

The ADF&G has opened its Unalakleet field office with a test fishery crew to conduct test fishery operations and help the public with information needs.

Early season actions to conserve Chinook salmon for escapement needs based in the concerns with expectations for early but very poor Chinook salmon runs into Norton Sound rivers continue to be a management focus. There are already reports of Chinook salmon being harvested in set gillnets in the Shaktoolik and Unalakleet Subdistricts. When possible, efforts will be made to refocus harvest pressure on more numerous chum and pink salmon.

The ADF&G emergency order issued last week closing the waters of the Unalakleet and Shaktoolik river drainages to sport fishing for Chinook salmon remains in effect. In addition, the Department issued a second emergency order effective Monday, June 2, 2014 closing all waters from Black Point to Point Romanof and from Rocky Point to Cape Denbigh to sport fishing for Chinook salmon. As a consequence of these actions, sport fishing for Chinook salmon is closed in all waters from Rocky point to Point Romanof until August 16. Any Chinook salmon incidentally caught while sport fishing for other species may not be removed from the water and must be immediately released alive.

The ADF&G recently held meetings in Koyuk, Shaktoolik, and Unalakleet to gather input from subsistence users regarding Chinook salmon conservation needs and management of the subsistence salmon fisheries this season. The input overwhelmingly favored providing brief subsistence openings for chum and pink salmon scheduled during favorable weather periods. Residents favored this adaptive approach rather than establishing set schedules and/or prolonged closures for Chinook salmon at the start of the season. The department is factoring these subsistence user concerns and preferences into developing an inseason management plan for Chinook salmon in Norton Sound.

Other Southern Norton Sound Waters (Black Point to Point Romanof)

The ADF&G will be closing all marine waters from Black Point south to Wood Point, east of St. Michael to subsistence salmon fishing from June 9 through June 30, 2014 in order to protect Chinook salmon migrating through southern Norton Sound. Subsistence salmon fishing in these marine waters will revert back to 24 hours a day 7 days a week on July 1. For all the waters from Wood Point to Point Romanof, subsistence salmon fishing is open 7 days a week but fisherman are requested to use set gillnets with a mesh size of 6 inches or less to minimize incidental harvests of Chinook salmon.

Shaktoolik (Subdistrict 5) and Unalakleet (Subdistrict 6)

Subdistrict 5 encompasses all waters from the tip of Cape Denbigh south to the terminus of Junction Creek. Subdistrict 6 encompasses all waters from Junction Creek south to Black Point. These two subdistricts have been managed as one fishery because studies have shown that fish stocks intermingle and harvests in one subdistrict likely affects the other.

It has been nearly ten years since there has been a directed commercial fishery for Chinook salmon in Norton Sound. Escapement goals have been difficult to reach, and in 2013 the total estimated run of Chinook salmon in the Unalakleet River was insufficient to even reach escapement needs. The 2014 Chinook salmon run is expected to be similar to that of 2013.

All marine and fresh waters including the Shaktoolik, Egavik, Unalakleet and Golsovia River drainages will close to subsistence salmon fishing Monday, June 9. Beginning the week of Monday, June 16, Subdistricts 5 and 6 marine waters will reopen for one 24-hour subsistence fishing period per week allowing gillnets with a mesh size of 6 inches or less. These chum salmon directed subsistence openings will be announced every Monday and will be timed to coincide with more favorable weather. For freshwater areas such as the Shaktoolik and Unalakleet rivers, the department will announce one 36-hour beach seine subsistence opening per week beginning the week of Monday June 23. Any Chinook salmon incidentally captured in beach seines must be immediately returned to the water alive.

Norton Bay (Subdistrict 4)

The Norton Bay Subdistrict includes all waters eastward from bald Head south to Point Dexter Effective June 9, all Norton Bay marine waters including those from Point Dexter west to Cape Denbigh, and all waters of the Inglutalik River and Ungalik River drainages will close to subsistence salmon fishing by emergency order. Koyuk River subsistence salmon fishing will not be affected by this action and will remain open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. The department will reopen the Ungalik and Inglutalik Rivers and the Norton Bay marine waters for one 48-hour salmon fishing period each week beginning Monday, June 16. These openings will be scheduled to coincide with more favorable weather conditions and announced each Monday. The department will begin increasing subsistence fishing time in Norton Bay Subdistrict on July 1. Additionally, commercial pink and chum salmon openings could begin as early as June 20.

Golovin (Subdistrict 2) and Elim (Subdistrict 3)

Subdistrict 2 includes all waters from Rocky Point to Cape Darby. Subdistrict 3 encompasses all waters from Carson Creek east to Bald Head.

Chinook salmon escapement goals have not been met in several years. Although these runs of Chinook appear to be small groups of fish at the northern edge of the range of viable Chinook salmon populations, the ADF&G is requesting subsistence fishermen to avoid targeting Chinook salmon, and to only fish with gillnets with a mesh size of 6 inches or less. Subsistence fishing with hook and line for Chinook salmon will be closed effective June 9, 2014 until further notice.

Federal Subsistence Fisheries Regulations for the Kotzebue and Norton Sound Areas

http://www.doi.gov/subsistence/regulation/fish_shell/upload/Kotz.pdf
http://www.doi.gov/subsistence/regulation/fish_shell/upload/Norton.pdf